

Portable Audio/Video Recorders

424.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for the use of portable audio/video recording devices by members of this department while in the performance of their duties. Portable audio/video recording devices include all recording systems whether body-worn, hand-held or integrated into portable equipment (42 Pa.C.S. § 67A07).

This policy does not apply to mobile audio/video recordings, interviews or interrogations conducted at any Briar Creek Township Police facility, authorized undercover operations, wiretaps or eavesdropping (concealed listening devices).

424.2 POLICY

The Briar Creek Township Police may provide members with access to portable recorders, either audio or video or both, for use during the performance of their duties. The use of recorders is intended to enhance the mission of the Department by accurately capturing contacts between members of the Department and the public.

A violation of this policy subjects the violator to discipline (see the Personnel Complaints Policy for additional guidance).

424.3 COORDINATOR

The Chief of Police or the authorized designee should designate a coordinator responsible for (42 Pa.C.S. § 67A07):

- (a) Establishing procedures for the security, storage, and maintenance of data and recordings.
 1. Storage should comply with Pennsylvania State Police standards (18 Pa.C.S. § 5706).
 2. Server hardware should be located in a secure area only accessible to authorized individuals and/or those who are in compliance with the Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Security Policy, to ensure data integrity and prevent loss of data. Cloud storage by a reputable vendor, with reasonable security measures, is acceptable.
- (b) Establishing procedures for accessing data and recordings.
- (c) Establishing procedures for logging or auditing access.
- (d) Establishing procedures for transferring, downloading, tagging or marking events.
- (e) Establishing procedures for the use of facial recognition software or programs operated through the Pennsylvania Justice Network (JNET).
 1. Operators of JNET Facial Recognition System (JFRS) shall have JNET training.
- (f) Approving recording devices for use by members based on Pennsylvania State Police standards (18 Pa.C.S. § 5706).

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424.4 MEMBER PRIVACY EXPECTATION

All recordings made by members on any department-issued device at any time, and any recording made while acting in an official capacity of this department, regardless of ownership of the device it was made on, shall remain the property of the Department. Members shall have no expectation of privacy or ownership interest in the content of these recordings.

424.5 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Prior to going into service, each uniformed member will be responsible for making sure that he/she is equipped with a portable recorder, issued by the Department, and that the recorder is in good working order. If the recorder is not in working order or the member becomes aware of a malfunction at any time, the member shall promptly report the failure to the Chief of Police and obtain a functioning device as soon as reasonably practicable. Uniformed members should wear the recorder in a conspicuous manner or otherwise notify persons that they are being recorded, whenever reasonably practicable.

Any member assigned to a non-uniformed position may carry an approved portable recorder at any time the member believes that such a device may be useful. Unless conducting a lawful recording in an authorized undercover capacity, non-uniformed members should wear the recorder in a conspicuous manner when in use or otherwise notify persons that they are being recorded, whenever reasonably practicable.

When using a recorder, the assigned member shall record his/her name, BCPD identification number and the current date and time at the beginning and the end of the shift or other period of use, regardless of whether any activity was recorded. This procedure is not required when the recording device and related software captures the user's unique identification and the date and time of each recording.

Members should document the existence of a recording in any report or other official record of the contact, including any instance where the recorder malfunctioned or the member deactivated the recording. Members should include the reason for deactivation.

424.6 ACTIVATION OF THE AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDER

This policy is not intended to describe every possible situation in which the recorder should be used, although there are many situations where its use is appropriate. Members should activate the recorder any time the member believes it would be appropriate or valuable to record an incident.

The recorder should be activated in any of the following situations:

- (a) All enforcement and investigative contacts including stops and field interview situations
- (b) Traffic stops including, but not limited to, traffic violations, stranded motorist assistance and all crime interdiction stops

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- (c) Self-initiated activity in which an officer would normally notify the Communication Center
- (d) Any other contact that becomes adversarial after the initial contact in a situation that would not otherwise require recording

Members should remain sensitive to the dignity of all individuals being recorded and exercise sound discretion to respect privacy by discontinuing recording whenever it reasonably appears to the member that such privacy may outweigh any legitimate law enforcement interest in recording. Requests by members of the public to stop recording should be considered using this same criterion. Recording should resume when privacy is no longer at issue unless the circumstances no longer fit the criteria for recording.

At no time is a member expected to jeopardize his/her safety in order to activate a portable recorder or change the recording media. However, the recorder should be activated in situations described above as soon as reasonably practicable.

424.6.1 SURREPTITIOUS USE OF THE AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDER

Pennsylvania law prohibits any individual from surreptitiously recording any conversation in which any party to the conversation has a reasonable belief that the conversation is private or confidential. However, Pennsylvania law expressly exempts law enforcement from this prohibition during the course of a criminal investigation where certain requirements are met (18 Pa.C.S. § 5704). Nothing in this section is intended to interfere with an officer's right to openly record any interrogation.

Members shall not surreptitiously record another department member without a court order unless lawfully authorized by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

424.6.1 CESSATION OF RECORDING

Once activated, the portable recorder should remain on continuously until the member reasonably believes that his/her direct participation in the incident is complete or the situation no longer fits the criteria for activation. Recording may be stopped during significant periods of inactivity such as report writing or other breaks from direct participation in the incident.

424.6.2 EXPLOSIVE DEVICE

Many portable recorders, including body-worn cameras and audio/video transmitters, emit radio waves that could trigger an explosive device. Therefore, these devices should not be used where an explosive device may be present.

424.7 PROHIBITED USE OF PORTABLE RECORDERS

Members are prohibited from using department-issued portable recorders and recording media for personal use and are prohibited from making personal copies of recordings created while on-duty or while acting in an official capacity.

Members are also prohibited from retaining recordings of activities or information obtained while on-duty, whether the recording was created with department-issued or personally owned

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recorders. Members shall not duplicate or distribute such recordings, except for authorized legitimate department business purposes. All such recordings shall be retained at the Department.

Members are prohibited from using personally owned recording devices while on-duty without the express consent of the Chief of Police. Any member who uses a personally owned recorder for department-related activities shall comply with the provisions of this policy, including retention and release requirements, and should notify the Chief of Police of such use as soon as reasonably practicable.

Recordings shall not be used by any member for the purpose of embarrassment, harassment or ridicule.

424.7.1 USE OF PORTABLE RECORDERS IN COURTROOMS

An officer should not activate a portable audio/video recorder in a courtroom during judicial proceedings except when the officer reasonably believes there is an actual or imminent emergency warranting activation while on-duty or while acting in an official capacity (201 Pa. Code Rule 1910).

Officers who activate a recorder in a courtroom shall notify the presiding judge as soon as practicable and within one business day provide a written report to the presiding judge and a supervisor. The report should include (201 Pa. Code Rule 1910):

- (a) The circumstances surrounding the activation.
- (b) The times of activation and deactivation.
- (c) An explanation of the officer's actions.

Any use or dissemination of the recording is prohibited without the written approval of the president judge of the court.

424.8 IDENTIFICATION AND PRESERVATION OF RECORDINGS

To assist with identifying and preserving data and recordings, members should download, tag or mark these in accordance with procedure and document the existence of the recording in any related case report.

A member should transfer, tag or mark recordings when the member reasonably believes:

- (a) The recording contains evidence relevant to potential criminal, civil or administrative matters.
- (b) A complainant, victim or witness has requested non-disclosure.
- (c) A complainant, victim or witness has not requested non-disclosure but the disclosure of the recording may endanger the person.
- (d) Disclosure may be an unreasonable violation of someone's privacy.
- (e) Medical or mental health information is contained.
- (f) Disclosure may compromise an undercover officer or confidential informant.

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Any time a member reasonably believes a recorded contact may be beneficial in a non-criminal matter (e.g., a hostile contact), the member should promptly notify a supervisor of the existence of the recording.

424.9 RETENTION OF RECORDINGS

All recordings shall be retained for a period consistent with the requirements of the established records retention schedule but in no event for a period less than 180 days.

424.9.1 RELEASE OF AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDINGS

Requests for the release of audio/video recordings shall be processed in accordance with the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.

424.10 REVIEW OF RECORDED MEDIA FILES

When preparing written reports, members should review their recordings as a resource (see the Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths Policy for guidance in those cases). However, members shall not retain personal copies of recordings. Members should not use the fact that a recording was made as a reason to write a less detailed report.

Supervisors are authorized to review relevant recordings any time they are investigating alleged misconduct or reports of meritorious conduct or whenever such recordings would be beneficial in reviewing a member's performance.

Supervisors shall review and document at least one randomly selected recording per quarter for each member under their direct supervision to:

- (a) Check that the assigned portable audio/video recording devices are properly maintained and functioning.
- (b) Check that the assigned portable audio/video recording devices are being used in accordance with policy.
- (c) Identify recordings that may indicate additional training or guidance is warranted.

Recorded files may also be reviewed:

- Upon approval by a supervisor, by any member of the Department who is participating in an official investigation, such as a personnel complaint, administrative investigation, or criminal investigation.
- Pursuant to lawful process or by court personnel who are otherwise authorized to review evidence in a related case.
- By media personnel with permission of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.
- In compliance with a public records request, if permitted, and in accordance with the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.

All recordings should be reviewed by the Open-Records Officer prior to public release (see the Records Maintenance and Release Policy).

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Recordings that unreasonably violate a person's privacy or sense of dignity should not be publicly released unless disclosure is required by law or order of the court.

424.11 GRANT FUNDING

In order to ensure eligibility for grant funding for body-worn cameras from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the Coordinator will be responsible for (42 Pa. C.S. § 67A07):

- (a) Confirming that this policy and any other agency protocol or guidelines on the use of body-worn cameras comply with recommendations made by the commission, as applicable.
- (b) Confirming that a copy of this policy and any other related protocol or guidelines are made available to the public on the department website and upon request as required by 42 Pa.C.S. § 67A07.

424.12 TRAINING

Subject to available resources, members who use audio or video recording devices shall receive periodic training on the operation of audio/video recording devices as well as this policy (42 Pa.C.S. § 67A07; 201 Pa. Code Rule 1910).

424.13 STORAGE AND MAINTENANCE OF DEVICES

Members shall be responsible for the secure storage of any assigned portable audio/video recording devices when not in use. At the end of each shift, members should charge any assigned portable audio/video recording devices in accordance with manufacturer specifications and department training.

Maintenance and repair of portable audio/video recording devices shall only be performed at the direction of the coordinator or the authorized designee and in accordance with manufacturer specifications.

424.14 PERIODIC REVIEW OF POLICY

The Chief of Police will ensure this policy is periodically reviewed and updated as necessary. This review will occur at a minimum of annually and in compliance with Section 103.6 of this Policy Manual.